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Reorganizing the Hierarchy:

Issue Salience and Preferences among Latino National-Origin Groups

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Reorganizing the Hierarchy:

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by

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Abstract

Reorganizing the Hierarchy:
Issue Salience and Preferences among Latino National-Origin Groups

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Political science has not adequately explored the many differences among Latino subgroups and what these differences may mean for policy preferences among Latinos in the aggregate. In this thesis, I seek to answer whether Latino subgroup identities have an effect on issue saliency and preferences and whether this effect remains relevant when accounting for the many socioeconomic and other factors that are thought to characterize Latino communities. I argue that Latino subgroup members have established goals and preferences that shape which issues they prioritize based upon their individual histories and interactions with U.S. policy. While a change in issue saliency may reorganize the hierarchy of preferences, it does not change the preferences themselves, just the attention given to an individual goal. These changes may appear to illustrate a stronger Latino solidarity overall and more homogenous opinion in terms of immigration policy, but they instead capture attention rather than the underlying established preferences among subgroups. This thesis constitutes a proposal to test this theory.

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Introduction

Recent surges in media attention to immigration have caused issue saliency among Latino subgroups to shift (Carey et al. 2014, Barreto et al. 2008). In doing so, a more unified Latino opinion in relation to immigration appears to form due to an increase in solidarity on the issue of immigration across Latino subgroups (Barreto et al. 2008). This project examines issue saliency, often used to measure the importance denoted to a particular issue but more accurately a measure of attention, as found among major Latino subgroup identities (Berelson et al. 1954, Wlezien 2005)[1]. Specifically, it investigates whether or not changes in issue saliency indicate changes in preferences among subgroups – and in a way that suggests more unified Latino opinions.[2] The results cast doubt on whether growing issue saliency on immigration among Latinos necessarily indicates that Latino policy preferences are becoming more similar.

This paper scrutinizes how identity shapes what Latinos perceive to be the "most important problem" and what this means for preferences (Fraga et al. 2006). In addition, it considers the effects of citizenship on issue saliency. While the primary focus of this paper is on the differences and similarities among the historical major Latino national-origin groups (Mexican Americans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans), this is only one dimension of the many and varied identities within the Latino community. These three groups were chosen due to the large sample size they provide. In studying these sub-groups, we attempt to differentiate issue salience (measured as the "Most Important Problem" within surveys) from established preferences while exploring whether changes in attention can be reflections of identity and what this means for the Latino moniker.

[1] In this thesis, we will be using it to indicate attention

[2] Sub-groups will be used interchangeably with national-origin as a term for the groups that together compromise Latino identity.

Traditionally, among Latinos, issue saliency has been studied in terms of group effects from either natural or manufactured experiments. This literature focuses on what effects outside forces can have on Latino opinion on immigration and what the implications are for Latinos as a whole (Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Carey, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2014). Their findings indicate that news about immigrants can be an avenue through which to trigger group cues which can change political behavior and opinion among respondents (Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008). When testing for immigration saliency, natural experiments, like the 2006 immigration protest marches, can have a great effect among Latinos, but research fails to explore how other identity markers, such as sub-group identity rather than Latino or Hispanic categorizations, can affect this attention (Carey, Branton and Martinez-Ebers 2014).

In exploring the effects of national origin group on issue saliency, we hope to identify differences in attention and investigate whether they illustrate a larger unified identity when removed from the context of artificial experimentation or similar situational effects. In order to do this, I will examine the historical perspectives of each group in order to better delineate their differences and then test for differences in issue salience across their political, socio-economical, and national origin status. I will do this while also controlling for the 2016 immigration protest marches as they serve as an ideal natural experiment variable.

When the issue of MIP (Most Important Problem) is explored among Latinos, it is largely focused on the topic of immigration (Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Carey, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2014). An emerging body of work explores Latino identity through the lens of issue awareness, specifically the issue of immigration, and suggests increased similarities among subgroups based upon natural experiments like the 2006 national immigration protest marches (Barreto et al. 2008, Carey, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2014). The reasoning behind this relies

on the effect of specific factors as an indicator of unified identities, or at the very least a unified reaction. By contrast, I hypothesize that changes in issue salience about immigration may measure changes in attention among Latino subgroups, but that these changes do not necessarily measure issue preferences and cannot be used as evidence of a more cohesive Latino identity. I also argue that while changes in issue salience may increase across all subgroups when a natural experiment is introduced, clear subgroup differences will remain.

Prior literature on the Latino electorate shows a tendency towards issue-oriented voting, with the local political environment and social attributes playing key roles in political behavior (DeSipio 1996, Kosmin and Keysar 1995, de la Garza, Garcia, and DeSipio 1992, Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla 2003, June and Haney 2008). Work on Latino behavior indicates that Latinos do not follow the prototypical patterns found in the average American voter (Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla 2003, Miller and Shanks 1996). Unlike Anglo voters, their strongest predictive indicator for party identification is Cuban origin, with their partisan identification based upon policy issue preferences with an emphasis on social and political factors rather than economic ones (Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla 2003).

By investigating what Latino communities consider to be the "Most Important Problem" affecting them and how this problem fits in with their established preferences, I hope to counter assumptions of Latino homogeneity and illustrate the effect that subgroup identity has on Latino political opinion. I also hope to expand on previous works which study Latino behavior, like Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla, which acknowledge that subgroup origin has an effect, Cubans primarily identifying as Republican while Puerto Ricans and Mexicans identify as Democrats, but do not delve into these differences and why they exist .

Subgroup Identities and the Differences among Latino Groups

Latino identity has been frequently contested among Latino politics scholars. Whether it can truly identify a community, and the opinions of said community, have been central tenets in the study of Latino politics (Comas-Diaz 2001, Masouka 2001, Moralles 2002, Padilla 1985, Torres and Baxter Magnolia 2004). Such differences within the Latino community, and the implications for studying this population in the aggregate, are not often explored (although see de la Garza et al. 1992; Uhlaner and Garcia 2006; Leal 2007). In order to better understand why the Latino community appears to be so heterogeneous in respects to certain topics while homogenous in others, this thesis will examine the subgroup identities which may serve to fractionalize the community at large. Specifically, I look at the three historically largest national-origin groups within the United States: Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, and Puerto Ricans. In doing so, I attempt to explore whether subgroup identities within the Latino electorate can help explain differences in salience of immigration attitudes through their differences in history, socioeconomic standing, and political associations.

The tendency to group the various subgroups which make up Latinos/Hispanics into a homogenous and coherent group has been in existence since at least the 1980s, with terms such as Latino and Hispanic often used interchangeably to describe it (Navarro and Mejia 2004). De la Garza points out that these unsubstantiated claims are often made by the parties themselves, with Democrats pointing to their historical support from Mexican Americans and Republicans focusing on the Latino connection to traditional family values and work ethic. Parties claim issues and in turn associate issues with specific sections of the population. In doing so, they look to support from these populations due to preconceived notions of the populations' policy preferences and the importance of those issue positions to their party identification. This allowed

both parties to claim at least some Latino support during the 1980s despite having little substantive evidence due to a lack of national surveys of Latinos during this time (de la Garza 1987; de la Garza et al. 1992).

The first truly national survey of Latinos that included respondents from the main national-origin group is described in *Latino Voices*, de la Garza et al.'s seminal 1992 work. Based on the Latino National Political Survey, the volume found distinct differences in opinion that contradicted any claims of a politically unified, one-dimensional Latino population. With Mexican Americans expressing relatively conservative policy views, and Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans aligning more liberally on certain policies, little consensus was found. The idea that Latinos held similar policy views was further tested in Leal's 2007 book chapter "Latino Public Opinion: Does it Exist?" which compared aggregate Latino and Anglo views across a range of issues. The chapter found that while clear differences existed between Latino and Anglo political opinion, they were not present for all issues. Latinos took more liberal positions on policy issues relevant to their communities, particularly immigration, and had a generally supportive opinion of "big government.". Yet when studied through the lens of national origin, there is a clear distinction between Cuban Americans and other Latinos in the former's unique support of the Republican Party despite not being distinctly more conservative in comparison to other Latinos or having greatly differing views on policy opinion (Leal 2007). These findings indicated the need to further study the role of national origin in Latino political behavior.

Circumstances of Immigration

A historical perspective on Mexican Americans provides a look into the unique circumstances which shape their current political status and perspectives. Mexican Americans were by far the largest Latino population in the United States prior to the Spanish American War with a history tracing back to the Spanish expeditions of the American Southwest in the early sixteenth century and continuing through the annexations following the Mexican-American War (De la Garza 1992, Garcia 2012). This history led to concentrated populations in the border states of Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona (Garcia 2012). This population would be augmented by a flow of economic and political migrants from Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thereby helping to retain Mexican culture stateside over the course of generations.

With Mexico's immigration history wrought with wars and battles for land, a distinct relationship between its citizens and the United States began to form. Not only were they tied together due to the land's history, there was also a flexibility in how Mexican migrants were forced to flee both to and from the United States depending on the situation, whether it be the U.S.'s purchase of their land or Mexico's tumultuous 1910 revolution. This caused Mexican migration along the borderlands to remain extremely common throughout the early 1900's until the early 1930's, during which the U.S. government deported hundreds of thousands of Mexicans during the Depression. Shortly afterwards, migration pattern changed once again with the creation of the "Bracero" program during World War II which imported Mexican workers to fill agricultural and other jobs.

Puerto Ricans also have a distinctive immigrant history in the United States. Won by the U.S. as a territory in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War, its citizens had little say in its acquisition. Unlike Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans congregated in the Northeast,

specifically New York City originally due to the shipping lines between New York and Puerto Rico and later due to the comfortably familiar communities that past generations had built. Some migrated to the Northeast as early as the nineteenth century, but Puerto Ricans were not officially U.S. citizens until the Jones Act of 1917. Decades later, in 1947, the act was amended in order to enable Puerto Ricans to elect a governor and other government officials (Garcia 2012). A portion of the islands inhabitants pushed to change its status to that of a free associated state in 1925, which would change its status from a territory belonging to the United States to that of an independent nation with a special U.S. relationship.

Considering its history as both joined and separate to the U.S., its migratory patterns were distinct to its status. Much like Mexican workers, Puerto Ricans in the 1940's and helped fuel industrialization by promoting a large wave of migrant workers during that time, this was made simpler by their status as citizens. Shortly thereafter, Puerto Rico became a commonwealth, helping them gain independence in a sense while still keeping them firmly tied to the United States

While the Spanish-American War helped the U.S. acquire Puerto Rico, it also helped form its relationship with Cuba. Once belonging to Spain, Cuba was helped in its liberation by the U.S. government under the condition a U.S. base be allowed on the island. Soon thereafter Cuba declared its independence from the U.S as well. The following decades are filled with a friendly relationship between the two countries until Fidel Castro's revolution. The subsequent surge in migration helped propel a mass exile of Cuban elites and professionals to the U.S.

This "golden exile" helped build a largely white, well-educated community of Cuban professionals in Florida, with more than 200,000 fleeing in three years (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004; Uhlaner and Garcia 1998). These immigrants were considered political refugees

and given a unique migration status through the Cuban Adjustment Act, which immediately differentiated their immigrant status and circumstances from those of the other two major Latino subgroups. While Puerto Rican and Mexican mass migrations were fueled by job growth and the need in the U.S. for manual labor (although many of the latter migrated because of the Mexican Revolution), Cubans were considered political refugees and as such afforded different privileges in status.

The political environment from which Cubans were fleeing meant a drastically different treatment by American immigration policy, which helped to not only shape the communities these immigrants would eventually create but also to affect their interaction with American politics. The status of refugee, and the mass exodus by those with more human capital, helped to differentiate this subgroup from other Latinos. Not only were these immigrants well-educated professionals, but with the support of federal legislation, they were also helping to achieve economic success in the U.S (Navarro and Mejia 2004).

This changed with the 1980 Mariel Boatlift migration, which brought over one hundred thousand refugees in a short period of time, included more Afro-Cubans than did the original mass migration, and saw rumors that Castro was sending prisoners to the US. The result was a backlash of anti-immigrant sentiment (Garcia 2012) as well as rising tensions among the Black community, which saw the different treatment of Haitian and Cuban refugees as unjust (McClain et al. 2009).

The three subgroups with the largest populations of immigrants into the United States therefore all have a past filled with territorial status changes vis-a-vis the U.S., which have influenced their relationship with immigration throughout the years. These differences have influenced everything from their political relationships to their socioeconomic development and

even their regional concentrations -- with Puerto Ricans staying near the ports of New York and having a growing population in Florida, Cubans concentrated in nearby Florida, and Mexicans maintaining the majority of their population along the border states (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004).

Socioeconomic Advancement:

Mexican migrants have long participated in US labor markets, whether individually or through organized "Bracero" programs. . Many migrants worked in the agricultural and light industrial fields in the first half of the 20th century, followed by the service and construction sectors in more recent times (Garcia 2012, Uhlaner and Garcia 1998). The proximity of the U.S. border and the presence of established communities helped encourage Mexican American migration. The service, agricultural, and technological manufacturing job growth in California helped make it a mecca for the Mexican American community during the 1960s, when the state was perceived as less discriminatory than Texas (Garcia 2012). This association of Mexican migrant with "worker" has helped fuel the perception as a working class community, which has helped associate them with the Democratic Party..

Many Puerto Rican workers migrated to the United States due to Operation Bootstrap, which helped meet industrial labor demands by encouraging a mass migration of workers during the 1940's after failing to heavily industrialize the island. This helped further cement Puerto Rican communities stateside and encouraged future generations of migration. This connection both to the working class and to a region of the country in which the industrial working class typically supports the Democratic Party helped shape Puerto Rican political behavior and party identifications.

Puerto Rican community concerns include high rates of unemployment, inadequate housing, and a lack of educational resources (Garcia 2012). These issues are exacerbated by the changing dynamics within New York City that have phased away low skill manufacturing jobs and encouraged residential segregation (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004). This segregation may have the benefit of perpetuating cultural practices and social networks, thereby allowing

Puerto Ricans to have a strong national origin identity, but this has also impeded the community from incorporating into the economic and societal mainstream.

Puerto Rican neighborhoods are also affected by poverty, housing costs, and crime (Navarro and Mejia 2004), all of which are perceived as issues "owned" by the Democratic Party (Petrocik 1996). An additional dimension to Puerto Rican communities is their concept of race. Political science scholars typically categorize race into primarily Black, White, and Asian, with an occasional focus on indigenous and ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, this is done in terms of who is defined as Black. Whereas in the U.S. people are generally described as either black, white, or Asian (with the occasional dimension of ethnicity), in Puerto Rico a variety of phenotypical variations can be used to describe someone as black, indigo, trigueno, negro, Moreno, and lastly white (Garcia 2012). This adds a perspective on race in the U.S., and its role in politics, that is unique to this population. This particular issue of race is unique to Puerto Ricans due to Mexican and Cuban migrants having a similar racial schema to that of the U.S. with the exception of Mexico's indigenous community.

Cuban migrant's socioeconomic development, specifically those migrating during the two mass migrations during the 60's and post-80's, were also specifically affected by race and its perception by their communities in Florida. The first group to flee Fidel Castro's reign was composed largely of well educated professionals who were predominantly white. Under the Cuban Adjustment Act, they were afforded many benefits, including "job training, English instruction, college loans, free certification for health professionals, housing subsidies, food stamps and food surpluses, and citizen exemption from certain jobs" (Garcia 2012). These benefits helped establish Cubans in the United States in a very different capacity than was the case for other large migrant groups.

The post-80's migration did not fare quite as positively. These groups were allowed by Fidel Castro to flee Cuba and as such were not heavily regulated like the prior generation of immigrants. These groups were more likely to include single, less-educated, rural, and service workers and were largely composed of Afro-Cubans, which caused strife within their Florida communities (McClain et al 2009.) Despite the negative reaction to the second wave of Cuban immigrants, Cubans still remain one of the most successful Latino subgroups in terms of general acceptance and educational attainment.

Political Affiliations

Despite decades of population growth, Mexican Americans did not see many political gains until the 1960s Chicano movement, which provided the population with political leaders and a guide for successful mobilization which revolved largely around social movements and interest groups while avoiding political association (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004). This national movement led to the creation of new Mexican American advocacy groups, like the National Council of La Raza, which helped establish much of their political strength in interest group activism rather than in elected officials (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004).

While Mexican Americans lived in many parts of the nation, public opinion polling efforts were focused on concentrated populations such as in San Antonio and Los Angeles. As the Democratic Party had much support among Mexican Americans in these areas, polling therefore provided an exaggerated view of Latino support for Democratic politicians (de la Garza 1992).

The border playing a key role in where Mexican American enclaves exist, the lack of mass national immigration in the late 20th century until manufacturing and service work made it amenable, the relatively recent activist mobilization roots of their political participation, are all unique to this national origin group. In taking these factors into account, we help further understand how Mexican Americans differ from other subgroups and in doing so help explain why these subgroups remain stratified in their political behavior despite partisan players dictating otherwise.

Puerto Ricans have been politically influenced both by their regional migration to New York, a location which has typically supports the Democrats, and by their tumultuous relationship with the island's relationship with the United States. Public opinion among Puerto

Ricans shows a push towards the adoption of statehood among conservatives, while the more liberal favor complete independence (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004). The status of Puerto Rico plays a role in the political opinion of those who have migrated to the U.S. mainland; it brings up questions of voting status for Puerto Ricans as well as cultural identity and economic opportunity. Under the current commonwealth status, Puerto Rico has no statehood and as such is not subject to federal taxes. This comes at a cost, as Puerto Rico is still formally considered a U.S. territory and the inhabitants of the island have no congressional representation that can vote on issues that affect the island. Island residents also cannot vote in U.S. mainland elections (particularly for president), thereby leaving them unable to change their status whether it be towards statehood or independence. These issues, along with political engagement and empowerment, help drive the Puerto Rican community's political behavior on the mainland.

Cuban immigrants' relationship to their home country has an even more significant effect on their political behavior stateside. While Puerto Rican communities are heavily influenced by their country of origin, Cuban migrants have the added layer of political refugee status. Their unique perspective is influenced by the generations who lived under Fidel Castro's communist regime and the dramatic effect this had both on their country and their own livelihood. This history meant that despite previous migrant groups benefiting from an array of social programs upon their arrival in the U.S. during the anticommunist wave, they found themselves strongly identifying with the Republican Party and receiving little attention from Democrats (Garcia 2012; Leal 2006; McClain et al. 2009; Navarro and Mejia 2004).

This push towards the Republican Party was cemented by the Reagan administration's strongly anti-communist agenda and has remained prevalent among older generations of Cubans, particularly those who still remember and were directly affected by the communist regime. This

history helps distinguish Cubans from Puerto Ricans and Mexicans politically both by their relationship to their home country's government and their own relationship with the parties in the United States.

History, Perception, and Reality

Preconceived notions of Latino behavior can sometimes clash with the reality of subgroup identity. For example, unlike various other sub-groups, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans have had a long standing association with the Democratic Party due to their shared concerns about housing, jobs, and other socio-economic conditions (de la Garza and Brischetto 1983; Nicholson, Pantoja, and Segura 2006; Uhlaner and Garcia 1998). Both subgroups share a disadvantaged socioeconomic status, which helps to reinforce their ties to the Democratic Party (de la Garza et al. 1992; Leal 2007; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001). Yet, when looking at individual attitudes, findings indicate that depending on the issue, Mexican Americans hold more conservative views than do Puerto Ricans (Leal 2007).

Issue ownership theory posits that voters consider certain parties to be better equipped to handle certain issues (Petrocik 1996; Franklin 1984). Economic opportunity, crime, education, and specifically racial issues are important to Latino communities and are commonly perceived as "owned" by the Democratic Party, which helps to tie Latinos to this party (Nicholson and Segura 2006; Petrocik 1996). Scholars have also found that Latinos see the Democratic Party as more credible and supportive of their preferences (Nicholson and Segura 2006).

Despite these findings, the Latino population is more likely to describe itself as a socially conservative group than are Anglos (de la Garza 1992; Leal 2006; Nicholson and Segura 2005). High religiosity within these subgroups is interpreted as explaining more conservative views on topics such as abortion and LGBT rights and contributes to the assumption that Latinos hold these values as a whole (Leal 2006; Nicholson and Segura 2005). Each subgroup, whether native born or foreign born, has a majority Catholic religious affiliation, with Mexican and Cuban foreign-born showing 82% and 80% affiliation, respectively, with the Puerto Rican native-born

at 70% (de la Garza et al. 1992; these figures have declined considerably in recent decades, however). While these assumptions can be true of certain subgroups, (Mexican Americans in California actively advocated for the ballot initiative Proposition 22, which sought to ban gay marriage), when examining Latinos in the aggregate, they do not hold more conservative opinions than does the Anglo voting population (Leal 2007; Nicholson and Segura 2005).

Notwithstanding, Latinos are still more likely to identify as conservatives than Anglos in the United States (Leal 2007). Still, conservative values are frequently associated most strongly with Cuban Americans. Cuban Americans differ from Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans not only in their location, with a large population in Florida and little dispersal, but also in their interaction with American policy (de la Garza 1992; Garcia 2012; Leal 2006; Uhlaner and Garcia 1998). Cuban Americans have been granted the status of refugees and therefore are distinct from other immigrant groups both in general and within the context of Latinos (de la Garza 1992). As noted above, largely because of foreign policy concerns (U.S. relations with Cuba), Cuban Americans are less likely to identify with the Democratic Party and the various issues they own (Petrocik 1998; Uhlaner and Garcia 2006). This partisan difference is enhanced by Cuban American affluence in comparison to other Latino subgroups (de la Garza 1992; Uhlaner and Garcia 2006).

This prioritization of issues which are typically owned by the Republican Party stems from the unique composition of Cuban immigrants. Those who immigrated prior to the 1960s were more likely to identify with Democrats, whereas those who immigrated during the anti-communist wave became more supportive of the Republican Party (de la Garza 1992; Leal 2006; Uhlaner and Garcia 2006). The large surge of Cuban immigrants, with legal status and largely Republican ties, is in contrast to Mexican Americans, who are predominantly Democrats but

have struggled with finding pathways to citizenship. It also contrasts with Puerto Ricans, who are predominantly Democratic but have no voting representation in Congress (Garcia 2012; Navarro and Mejia 2004; Moreni and Warren 1992).

The literature on Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans illustrates subgroup differences in migration experiences, receptions, and socioeconomic status, and the resulting relationships of these groups with the parties. It also demonstrates a narrative of social conservatism and aggregate political characterizations that conflict with findings on the behavior of individual national-origin groups. The goal of this paper is to test whether the saliency of immigration differs among Latino subgroups as a result of the attention brought to the issue by the 2006 marches.

Preferences and Issue Saliency

Within the Latino politics literature, issue saliency is used to measure the strength of Latino group identity and opinion (Barreto et al. 2008; Carey, Branton, Martinez-Ebers 2014; Martinez 2008; McClain et al. 2009; Sanchez 2006). On the other hand, issue saliency is used in the more general political science literature to measure a much simpler concept: attention (Jones 1994; Wlezien 2005; Wolfe 2012). Empirically, issue saliency is measured using the survey question about the Most Important Problem (MIP), which asks respondents what problem they perceive to be the most important to them, thereby identifying the problem which has most captured their attention at that time.

H1: While an increase in saliency of immigration will occur across all Latino subgroups following the immigration protest marches, the degree of saliency increases will differ. This will illustrate a difference in prioritization among subgroups not identifiable when measuring Latino opinion in the aggregate.
H2: Saliency among subgroups will remain different even after controlling for socioeconomic and political factors including the immigration protest marches.

Issue salience is the relative importance that individuals ascribe to issues (Jones 1994; Wolfe 2012). In asking the MIP question, we capture the prioritization of a given issue by respondents. When looking at the saliency of immigration within the Latino community, a general increase in issue salience among Latinos overall gives the impression of unity among respondents. This can lead to the assumption that because the Latino population as a whole is giving its attention to one particular problem, the preferences of the population must be similar

as well. While this may seem to naturally derive from unified general increase in issue saliency, it fails to take into account the heterogeneous nature of Latino national-origin populations based on their historical and contemporary community differences.

This leads to the question: many Latinos may consider the same issue as important, but do they actually share the same opinion on how to approach it? Increased issue saliency gives little indication about what the individual thinks of the issue. In order to understand the underlying goals of the individual, their attention must be placed within a given context. That is to say, does a Cuban American share preferences with a Mexican American? Will they share them with Puerto Ricans? Or will these subgroup identities, and their historical context and treatment within the United States, hold greater weight?

Increased issue saliency among all Latino subgroups was found during the Latino National Surveys conducted before and after the 2006 national immigration protest marches (Carey, Branton, Martinez-Ebers 2014). Respondents surveyed after the protests began were more likely to perceive immigration as the Most Important Problem than were those surveyed beforehand. These findings detail a mass shift in attention within Latino subgroups towards a single problem: immigration (Martinez 2008). The protests, which received mass media attention and were heavily covered by the Spanish speaking media, signaled a shift in attention among the population; immigration was ranked as the 11th most important problem in 2004, only two years before the protests began.

I propose that while a change in attention may have occurred, a shift in goals and preferences themselves is far less likely. Instead, this increase in issue saliency may produce a false flag which appears to indicate a more unified overall Latino group but instead speaks only to the reframing of a problem causing it to be reprioritized due to its exposure. I also argue that

when testing this theory, degrees of difference in issue saliency among different Latino subgroups will be found and will be explained by established preferences and histories among those subgroups.

The preferences of subgroups have been molded over years of interactions with policy, generational shifts, geographic effects, immigrant generations, and a variety of other factors. As such, these preferences are difficult to change (Jones 1994; de la Garza 1992). Even when preferences appear to change, this is often simply a result of an issue context change which shifts the prioritization of a given issue and may cause shifts in decision making to address this new reprioritization (Jones 1994; Wolfe 2014). I argue that this change in context, during which immigration was brought to the forefront due to media attention, is what helped immigration gain saliency, and *seemingly* produce a more unified Latino population, during the 2006 national immigration protest marches. In testing for differences in issue saliency, I hope to find evidence that subgroup identities provide more reliable evidence of the Latino electorate's views and behaviors. I presume that the increase in saliency of immigration as a result of the 2006 national protest marches did not necessarily change established preferences but instead, reordered the hierarchy of preferences among these subgroups by shifting attention. This, in turn, reprioritized immigration among the overall Latino populace without changing the policy goals these individual subgroups already had in terms of immigration. That is to say, while the natural experiment in the 2006 protest marches may have increased salience for all Latino subgroups, their individual reactions and attention will remain inherently different due to their subgroup status.

Data and Analysis

In order to test whether subgroup identity creates differences in the salience of different policy issues, I use the 2006 Latino National Survey, as it was administered both before and after the 2006 protests began, thereby capturing the attention shift as it was occurring and providing a natural experiment to test the hypothesis. Furthermore, the LNS asks specific questions focusing on immigration attitudes, thereby allowing for a measure of preferences pre and post any saliency increase. It also asks questions which identify citizenship.

Table 1 presents the logistic regression results predicting "illegal immigration" as the MIP among the three major Latino subgroups. In order to test for both increased saliency as a whole as well a difference in saliency across subgroups, I divided my sample into pre and post-march timeframes and tested for increased salience as a whole using a bivariate logit and increased salience across groups using an ordered logit.

The addition of the citizenship control variable will help further explain the results of the MIP, as it will show that differences among subgroups cannot be solely attributed to its share of non-citizens. The "Others" subgroup identified in the model will capture all Latinos that identify outside of the three major subgroups (ex. El Salvadorians, Venezuelans, etc.). While the "Others" subgroups captures a large portion of our sample, it is constructed of both Central and South American subgroups which individually include too few respondents to separately analyze, unlike the three major subgroups I have chosen to examine in this paper.

Table 1.

"Illegal Immigration" as Most Important Problem(MIP): By Latino National Origin Subgroups

	Latino MIP	Std. Error	P>[t]
Cuban	-.76	.29	.009***
Puerto Rican	-.99	.24	.000***
Others	-.70	.13	.000***
Education	-.05	.02	.039
Female	.34	.09	.000***
Citizenship	-.57	.10	.000***
N Cases			N= 7555

Note: The Mexican subgroup category is the base alternative in this logit regression.
Source: Latino National Survey (2006)

Our results in Table 1 indicate that even when controlling for individual citizenship, Mexicans are significantly different from other subgroups in terms of immigration saliency. Were the citizenship variable not included, these differences may have been attributed to the higher rate of non-citizenship among Mexicans Americans. These differences hold across both the Cuban and Puerto Rican subgroups, with Mexicans having a significantly higher likelihood of perceiving "illegal immigration" as the "Most Important Problem" when compared to Cubans and Puerto Ricans. This finding is supported by their individual differences in the circumstances of immigration, which indicate that Mexican Americans are the most likely to live in the United

States without authorization, with Cubans having been granted refugee status and Puerto Ricans having been granted citizenship.

Table 2. Subpopulation Logit Model: Immigration as the Most Important Problem for Non-Citizens

National Origin	Coefficients	Standard Error	Z-value	P>[z]	95% Confidence Interval
Mexican	.17	.009	17.91	0.000	[.15, .19]
Cuban	.12	.049	2.37	0.018	[.02, .21]
Others	.09	.012	6.88	0.000	[.06, .11]

When running a margins command to perform subpopulation estimates, my findings become more clear in what causes the differences among subgroups. This table indicates that of the Mexican subgroup surveyed, 17% of those who were non-citizens considered immigration to be the most important problem along with 12% of Cubans. Puerto Ricans are excluded from this analysis as they do not have a non-citizen population.

Table 3. Ordered Logit: Base Model

National Origin	Pre-March Odds Ratio	Pre-March P>[t]	Post-March Odds Ratio	Post-March P>[t]
Cuban	.15	0.010	.41	0.005
Puerto Rican	_	_	.28	0.000
Others	.62	.0.036	.66	0.009
constant	.07	0.000	.22	0.000

In order to better test my hypothesis, I created four models which tested both pre and post-march salience. Each of the four models had 3,448 pre-march responses sample and 4,988 post-march responses sample. As these models consisted of odds ratios in logistic regression,

their interpretation when it pertains to my main independent variable of subgroup origin differs from previous models in this paper. Our Base Model in Table 3 consists of testing our independent variable of subgroup identity for saliency without any additional controls. Pre-march findings indicate that the odds of Cubans finding immigration to be the most important problem are only .15 that of Mexicans, which is our base categorical variable.

In examining the pre-march data for the Puerto Rican national origin group there were high correlations among predictor variables, in this case, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in the pre-march models, which led to unreliable estimates. In examining the pre-march data for Puerto Ricans, the sub population showed uniformity in their issue saliency priorities which caused collinearity to occur within the model. In order to run the analysis, this subgroup had to be removed from the pre-march sample, leaving the pre-march sample to only reflect the saliency of immigration among Mexicans, Cubans, and Others.

Examining the post-march effects proves to be a simpler task, and we see a notable increase in saliency among Cubans (jumping from .15 to .41) following the natural experiment, thereby lessening the gap between themselves and Mexicans. For Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, their odds of finding immigration to be the most important problem are only .28 times that of Mexicans surveyed. This gap is substantively supported by the lack of non-citizens in the Puerto Rican population as opposed to those in the Cuban or Mexican populations demonstrated in Table 2. These results all display statistical significance and are supportive of my hypothesis that while a natural experiment may be a focusing event that should increase salience, the three subgroups still remain markedly different in the salience of immigration.

When we test this same Base Model for pre and post probabilities of respondents who consider immigration to be the "Most Important Problem," the differences between subgroups

are made even clearer. During pre-march testing, the likelihood that Mexican respondents would consider immigration the MIP was at 7%, but following post-march testing this more than doubled to 17%. Puerto Ricans, due to their collinear results, were not able to be analyzed in the pre-march sample but were 8% likely in the post-march sample to identify immigration as the MIP, thereby showing the expected low likelihood based on preliminary tests. Cubans in the Base Model start at the lowest likelihood(only 1%) and go to 5% post march. The Others subgroup is surprising in how similar it is in results to Mexican respondents, going from 5% to 12% post-marches. This test shows Mexican respondents as the most likely to find immigration to be the MIP both pre and post-marches.

Table 4. Ordered Logit: Socioeconomic Model

National Origin	Pre-March Odds Ratio	Pre March P>[t]	Post March Odds Ratio	Post March P>[t]
Cuban	.20	0.031	.60	0.118
Puerto Rican	--	--	.35	0.000
Others	.67	0.077	.70	0.024
Education	1.02	0.638	.90	0.002
Income	.90	0.148	.90	0.002
No Income Response	1.07	0.811	.83	0.243
Gender	1.21	0.321	1.45	0.001
Age	0.98	0.030	.98	0.000
No Age Response	.42	0.066	.50	0.003
Constant	.13	0.000	.60	0.019

Table 4. consists of a socioeconomic model. This model takes into account the variables which can significantly affect public opinion such as income and education. In this model, I included both responses for income and age as well as those who left this question blank, as the missing cases would have severely reduced the sample thereby rendering the analysis less nationally representative. In terms of statistical significance, we see that none of the

socioeconomic controls, except for age and no age response, hold any weight in the pre-march model. In the post-march data, this changes. The high impact of gender on the salience of immigration, with a notably greater effect than education and income, is statistically significant and brings up the question of why the salience of women is 1.45 that of men.

The results from examining both pre and post march data reveal what I expected in terms of subgroup salience of immigration. There is an increase in saliency among subgroups in comparison to the base model and we see the expected increase in both Cuban and Others when going from pre to post marches. Due to the collinearity found in the testing of the Puerto Rican subgroup, we cannot discern as clear an interpretation but we still see an increase in salience when comparing the socioeconomic post-march model to that of the base post-march results. These results let us know that while socioeconomic factors may affect public opinion, the effects from subnational origins persist and are not diminished even when controlling for those factors. Instead, considering the historical context of these groups, it is more likely that national origin has helped to influence the socioeconomic position of respondents, thereby affecting their opinion on MIP.

Analyzing the pre and post-march likelihood of MIP in the Socioeconomic Model allows for a view of percentages which accounts for socioeconomic effects on subgroup salience. Here we see Mexicans with 7% pre-march and 16% post, thereby showing little change from the previous model despite the additional socioeconomic control variables. The likelihood of Cubans choosing immigration as the MIP is ten times post-march what it was before the natural experiment, with 1% pre-march and 10% post. Puerto Ricans show a decline from the estimates in the Base Model, with only 6% post, half of the likelihood estimated in the Base Model. The

Others subgroup consists of 5% pre-march and 12% once again in post, thereby remaining consistent in salience much like the Mexican subgroup.

With the additional control variables added within this model, the point that arises is how remarkably low immigration is consistently across subgroups. Despite the ten-time increase among Cuban respondents, they still seem to peak at 10%. While this study focuses on examining the differences among subgroups through the examination of immigration due to the immigration marches focusing event, the question of what exactly is capturing most of these Latino subgroups' attentions remains to the answered.

Table 5. Ordered Logit: Political Model

National Origin	Pre-March Odds Ratio	Pre March P>[t]	Post March Odds Ratio	Post March P>[t]
Cuban	.13	0.005	.40	0.004
Puerto Rican	_	_	.28	0.000
Others	.62	0.037	.66	0.010
Party Identification	1.31	0.066	1.15	0.074
No Party Identification	1.60	0.163	1.40	0.055
Ideology	1.11	0.452	1.06	0.502
No Ideology	1.40	0.406	1.32	0.233
Interest in Politics	1.10	0.415	.93	0.306
Constant	.03	0.000	.15	0.000

When looking at the political model in Table 5, we see a very different interpretation of what may be affecting salience. The results of our main independent variable, subgroup origin, are extremely similar to our original base model with no controls. While ideology and interest in politics has no statistical significance in our results, in either pre or post-march testing, we do see party identification (including the response of no party identification) as increasing the odds that those surveyed will find immigration to be the most important problem. These results indicate that what most heavily affects the saliency of this issue is partisan identification.

The likelihood of immigration as the MIP for Mexicans is 7% in the pre-march sample and 17% in the post. Cuban subgroup has a weaker effect than in the socioeconomic model, moving from 1% to 8%, and the Puerto Ricans analyzed in the post-march sample decline 5% in likelihood than what was estimated in either the Socioeconomic or Base models. While this model discourages us from relying on national origin for understanding saliency, it does show that the differences among subgroups remain consistent. This indicates that despite the addition of variables that seem to greatly affect our dependent variable, the differences in effect from our subgroups remain, further supporting our original hypothesis.

Table 6. Ordered Logit: Fully Specified Model

National Origin	Pre-March Odds Ratio	Pre March P>[t]	Post March Odds Ratio	Post March P>[t]
Cuban	.18	0.019	.57	0.077
Puerto Rican	_	_	.35	0.000
Others	.67	0.082	.70	0.026
Education	1.00	0.903	.90	0.003
Income	.90	0.126	.90	0.001
No Income Response	1.06	0.826	.82	0.238
Gender	1.20	0.346	1.48	0.000
Age	.98	0.026	.98	0.000
No Age Response	.42	0.071	.50	0.004
Party Identification	1.25	0.152	1.14	0.104
No Party Identification	1.30	0.460	1.15	0.440
Ideology	1.17	0.292	1.12	0.200
No Ideology	1.50	0.327	1.38	0.181
Interest in Politics	1.15	0.264	1.03	0.642
Constant	.05	0.000	.35	0.004

Despite the very tempting result from Table 5, when I created a fully specified model which not only controlled for the political identity questions captured in our 3rd model but also captured those from our 1st and 2nd, we return to the findings we expected. All of our control variables from the political model lose significance in both pre and post testing. We see a sizable

difference in the odds of Cuban saliency, with it moving from only .18 times that of Mexican respondents to .57 post-marches. These findings support the original hypothesis that the marches would serve as a shock effect and increase saliency, but we still see clear differences among subgroups. The Others category, which captured all other respondents of the LNS that were not part of the original subgroups, has a smaller increase, going from .67 to .70. Puerto Ricans, while unfortunately incomparable to pre-march data due to collinearity, still shows an increase with the addition of fully specified controls going from .28 in the base model to .35 in the fully specified model.

Another interesting finding is that of the effect gender has on immigration salience. Similar to the socioeconomic model, gender only attains statistical significance post-march but remains a strong indicator of salience, its saliency among women being 1.20 that of men pre-marches to 1.48 post marches. When looking at the percentage of those likely to choose immigration as the MIP in the Fully-Specified Model, Mexican respondents go from 7% in the pre-march sample to 16% in the post-march sample, Cubans go from 1% to 9%, and Puerto Ricans likelihood in the post-march sample is 6%.

While it may seem useful to examine Latino identity as a whole, our results show that aggregate outcomes do not necessarily capture the fractionalization in attention within the Latino community. By using subgroup identities, we found that while saliency may have increased across all subgroups during an intense media period, these increases were subject to the effect of subgroup identity. This indicated that while Latinos may have similar avenues through which attention is captured, such as a mass focusing event like the 2006 immigration protest marches, their goals and preferences, as molded by subgroup identity, still hold greater weight in how that attention organizes its hierarchy of goals. These findings also help show that while the effect on

saliency itself is better explained by socioeconomic and political variables, the differences between subgroups are not erased by the addition of explanatory variables, further indicating that these subgroups are inherently different in their policy opinions.

Conclusion

National origin group plays an influential role in what Latinos perceive to be their Most Important Problem, thereby affecting the saliency of issues despite other factors which may appear to unify opinion. The unique cultural history of each group in the United States has helped create the current population and in doing so helped to differentiate them from each other. While it may be in the interest of political parties to group these populations together, they do both themselves and Latinos a disservice. Without properly identifying what makes these groups behave the way they do, political parties will find it difficult to increase their "Latino" support.

The individual needs of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans may be tied to their socioeconomic status and even their region, but it is also greatly influenced by their national origin. Once this is taken into account, we can better address the needs of these subgroups and also better understand why they behave the way they do politically. The tendency for political parties to refer to them in the aggregate further distances the parties from a group that is growing rapidly across the United States. If no effort is made to understand these differences, then no effort to unite them on behalf of the political parties can be considered realistic. The findings in this paper indicate that subgroup identity, despite many controls, remains a persistent motivator for Latino immigration policy salience.

These findings contribute to a variety of Latino politics, public opinion, and public policy literatures, but more research should be done to explore the intricacies of this topic. For the purpose of this project, I focused my analysis on examining how Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans demonstrate different political priorities, but future research should test the influence of subgroup identity on policy priorities and preferences by testing pre and post-protest attitudes on immigration and examining whether the increase in attention helped to change

established preferences. Additional research could go on to test this theory across generations in the U.S. in order to see whether the strength of national origin is diminished in later generations or whether it persists despite the loss of cultural ties. While the focus of this paper was the salience of immigration and its insight into what it may mean for Latino identity in the aggregate, the reality of what Latinos seem to prioritize seems to lie elsewhere. With only a 17% likelihood of Mexican American respondents choosing immigration as the MIP, it seems that the next area to be tested is what other socioeconomic or political issues they give priority to and whether they, like immigration, can be better understood through a natural or manufactured experiment.

Appendix:

Coding the Most Important Problem

The MIP variable was recoded into a binary variable in order to run a logit regression. This was done by coding the answers to the question:
"What do you think is THE one most important problem facing the country today?" Answers were coded 1 if "illegal immigration" and 0 if any other choice was chosen. Missing cases were dropped from the analysis.

Table 7.

What do you think is the most important problem facing the nation?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	6,648	87.99	87.99
1	907	12.01	100.00
TOTAL	7,555	100.00	

Coding National Origin

The use of the "ancestry" variable was done due to the increase in missing cases when using other questions that more precisely measured national origin. The "ancestry" variable allowed for a sample size of 420 Cubans, 5,704 Mexicans, and 822 Puerto Ricans. These numbers, in particular the Cuban sample, would have greatly decreased had a different variable been used. The "ancestry" variable had the added benefit of directly asking what the individual identified as, stating:

"From which country do you trace your Latino heritage?"

This question not only captures national origin identity but it also captures United States born Latinos while allowing them to identify with subgroups. Using "ancestry", I created a new

variable “NATORIGINS” in order to rescale the “ancestry” variable into the four groups used to describe national origin, Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and “Others”. The “Others” category was used to encompass all other national subgroup identities within the sample. Mexican was used as the base alternative.

Table 8.

NATORIGINS	Freq.	Percent
Mexican	5,704	66.06
Cuban	420	4.86
Puerto Rican	822	9.52
Other	1,688	19.55
Total	8,688	100.00

Weighting MIP

Next, I weighted the newly recoded MIP variable in order to showcase the mean in percentages of those who answered “illegal immigration” as their MIP and to present nationally-representative sample.

Table 9.
Weighted Difference of Means Test

A weighted difference of means test was run as a preliminary test showing support for my theory. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between subgroups. Mexicans were used as the base alternative.

Table 10.

Weighted Difference of Means Test

	Coef.	Std. Error	P>[t]
Cuban	-.09	.019	.000***
Puerto Rican	-.11	.012	.000***
Others	-.07	.011	.000***

Control Variables

Education, gender, and citizenship were used as additional control variables. Income was excluded due to the high number of missing cases. Education was not recoded and the original raw data scale was used in the final analysis. Gender was recoded Male=0 and Female=1 and weighted along with the rest of the data.

Citizenship status was attained by using the question:

	Mean	Linearized Std. Err.
Immigration as MIP:		
Mexican	.16	.006
Cuban	.06	.018
Puerto Rican	.04	.010
Other	.08	.009

"Now we would like to ask you about U.S. Citizenship. Are you currently applying for citizenship, planning to apply to citizenship or not planning on becoming a citizen?"

The answer choices were: currently applying for citizenship, planning to apply for citizenship, not planning on becoming a citizenship and DK/Ref. By using the missing cases in this question, those with citizenship are captured, as that is the only alternative to the question. To do so, I recoded all answers other than missing cases as 0 and missing cases as 1. This was done to dissuade critiques of findings being attributed not to subgroup identity but to citizenship status.

Model:

The model employed in this paper is the logit regression model with the log likelihood function of:

$$\ln(L(\beta)) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \{y_i \ln[F(x_i'\beta)] + (1 - y_i) \ln[1 - F(x_i'\beta)]\}$$

The reason this particular model was employed was due to logit (and probit) models capturing not only the effects of the independent variables, but also that of the controls in relation to each other. Logit models imply interaction effects without specified terms. This allows for the interaction between my key control variable, citizenship, and my key independent variables, national origin, to be captured in our results without an additional interaction variable being added to my model. This also means that any given independent variable's effect on the dependent variable, immigration saliency, hinges on the values of all independent variables, including control variables. I specifically used a weighted logit model in order to provide a nationally representative sample that is difficult to parse from the raw data without a weight. The use of the logit model ensured that citizenship status could not be argued as the true motivator for immigration saliency by including it, and all other variables in the model, in the effects of the individual subgroup variables.

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